



Fact Sheet:



The Therapeutic Community

The Therapeutic Community (TC) is a highly structured and highly supervised recovery program designed to treat the behavioral, emotional, and family issues of substance abusers. The TC requires abstinence from alcohol and other drugs and emphasizes self-help, personal growth, peer support, social responsibility, and moral development.

People in a TC are members of an extended family, not patients in an institution. The heart of the TC is an environment where services are provided in a series of phases from Orientation to Aftercare. TCs work with both adult and adolescent substance abusers in residential, day treatment, and outpatient programs. There are long-term and short-term TCs. The length of treatment varies from thirty days to two years.

Within the TC, all of the household tasks, groups, individual counseling and educational seminars promote personal responsibility and emotional growth. All activities are part of an integrated set of experiences, in which members examine their attitudes and behaviors in a context of mutual support. Peer pressure is utilized as a catalyst to convert criticism and feedback into personal insight and behavioral change.

Members of the TC earn status and privileges through demonstrations of responsibility and self-help. Members play a significant role in managing the community, and acting as positive role models for other members to emulate.

In the daily process of working and growing together, members learn to trust others, develop self-esteem, and construct a productive, substance-free lifestyle.

The essential elements of a TC are: behavioral limits, sanctions and rewards, role modeling, supervised peer confrontation groups, self-help, mutual support, peer pressure, counseling, education, personal and community responsibility, job functions, vocational training, and re-entry back into society. Clinical staff, themselves often in recovery, represent the rational authority within the peer-driven structure of the TC.

TCs have developed special programs to meet the needs of numerous populations, including women with children, ethnic minorities, individuals with a Dual Diagnosis of mental illness in addition to substance abuse, young adults, people with HIV/AIDS, homeless people, and those referred from the criminal justice system. As they have over the last forty years, TCs will continue to adapt to meet society's needs.

The TC is a long-term drug-free modality that has been rigorously researched. The TC is a worldwide movement, represented by the World Federation of Therapeutic Communities and nationally by Therapeutic Communities of America. In California, TCs are represented by California Therapeutic Communities (CTC).